

# **Role of the Mentor Teacher**

The mentor teacher is a teacher educator. As a mentor teacher, you have significant influence on the development of the intern. The mentor teacher is in an ideal position to assist with planning, to offer constructive suggestions, to provide informed analysis of teaching, and to reinforce appropriate aspects of the intern's performance. Accepting an intern implies a professional commitment to collaborate and communicate with Towson University personnel also supervising the intern.

## **Commitment**

- Internship I and II interns arrive in many stages of development. Towson University does not assure that each intern will be able to perform at an "outstanding" level. The task of the mentor teacher is assist and support the intern as he/she extend, and refine his/her knowledge and skills as an emerging teacher.
- Serving in a dual role, as classroom teacher of children and as mentor teacher of a University student, there should be a balance of needs of both. *Always*, the first priority is the protection and best interests of the children in the charge of the mentor teacher.

## **Collaboration**

- Attending orientation sessions provided by the Early Childhood Education Department (ECED) can enhance the understanding of the standards and expectations for the Internship I/II experience. The willingness to participate in such meetings is a beginning step to establishing partnerships with Towson University.
- Planning lessons together with the intern.
- Reading and discussing all materials supplied by ECED will forge a stronger partnership in providing a supportive environment for the intern.

## **Communication**

- Keeping written observational notes of the intern's performance. Share these notes with her/him on a regular (daily) basis.
- Preparing to share your informed suggestions and praise with the intern, as well as to sharing and receiving honest information about the Intern with the university supervisor.

## **The role of the Mentor Teacher is to:**

- Provide a high quality-learning environment.
- Share professional expertise.
- Analyze and explain teaching and learning.
- Model effective instructional and classroom management techniques. Share time-tested ideas and encourage the intern to try his/her own ideas
- Nurture the development of the intern by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

- Include the intern in professional development opportunities provided by the school and the school district.
- Make time to meet with the intern regularly. Create opportunities for conversations.
- Conference weekly with the intern about planning, implementing and assessing instruction.
- Assist the intern in developing skills in planning, implementing, and assessing instruction.
- Offer written and oral suggestions based upon observations of the intern.
- Share constructive feedback and praise with the intern.
- Help the intern develop a positive attitude about continuous professional growth and development.
- Complete mid-term and final evaluations using ECED forms in a timely manner.
- Uphold the standards set by Towson University.
- Identify service learning and/or action research opportunities.
- Maintain frequent communication with the university supervisor.
- Share concerns about the Internship experience with the university supervisor

## **Teach/Coach/Reflect Process**

The role of the mentor teacher is to teach the intern what one knows about teaching, coach the intern so that her/his skills can be developed in a supportive, mentored environment, and provides opportunities to *reflect* on the many aspects of the teaching/learning process. By encouraging the intern to analyze progress and to identify problems and possible solutions, this evolution from intern to teacher will be more valuable and meaningful. The following guidelines may help to facilitate this process:

### **Orientation**

#### **A. Introductory Conference between Mentor Teacher and Intern**

- Share philosophy and goals.
- Explain classroom responsibilities and procedures.
- Define the role of the Intern in the classroom.
- Discuss professional expectations such as appropriate attire, school policies and procedures.
- Discuss and reflect on each other's expectations.

#### **B. Orientation to the Classroom**

- Introduce the intern as a professional, a co-teacher.
- Provide the intern with a desk or work space.
- Provide a class list and seating chart; discuss special needs of individuals in the class.
- Plan an activity to engage the intern and students in an informal conversation so they can become better acquainted. Allow the intern to present an "All about Me" type of introduction.
- Review class schedule, routines, and procedures with the intern.

- Orient the intern to supplies and materials; discuss policies regarding the use of these materials.
- Post the intern's name in the classroom.

#### C. Initial Conference with University Supervisor

- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the internship.
- Discuss school/school system and University calendars, important dates, observations, course work assignments, ECED departmental evaluation requirements, and the midpoint and final evaluation scheduling.
- Exchange phone numbers and email addresses; decide how to maintain ongoing communication.
- Set due dates for required lessons and activities.

#### D. Orientation to School and Staff (possibly conducted by the school principal or PDS coordinator)

- Discuss the general philosophy of the placement school.
- Tour the placement school building. Provide a map of the school with room numbers and exits clearly labeled (nurse, office, bathrooms, staff lounges, etc). Acquaint the Intern with facilities, available materials and equipment. Provide orientation for using audiovisual equipment, computers, video cameras, and the proper procedures for accessing and using them.
- Introduce the Intern to all placement school personnel (administrative, support, and resource personnel).
- Distribute the placement school's handbook and discuss policies regarding student conduct, arrival and dismissal routines, clerical, and organizational procedures.
- Discuss fire drill and other building exiting procedures.
- Inform the intern about available special services and resources.
- Define the extent of the intern's authority and responsibility in the placement school building.

### **Planning with the Intern**

- Remind the intern to keep the required plans and observation.
- Plan time to collaborate with the intern. Focus on a topic. Discuss the topic and how it relates to the intern/internship.
- Share written lesson plans with the intern and provide a sample format for daily, weekly, and long-range plans.
- Provide access to curriculum guides and formal assessments and explain how these are used in the classroom, school, and district.
- Discuss the thinking behind planning for instruction. How are goals determined? How are objectives determined? Why are specific activities selected? How are students assessed for learning? What adaptations should be made?

- Model lessons for the interns. Provide opportunities to discuss what was done and why.
- Plan weekly and delineate responsibilities clearly. Review the schedule with the Interns so he/she knows in advance what is expected.
- Discuss the formulation of long-range goals and plans for the semester focusing on curriculum areas and skill development.
- Help the intern develop plans for independent lessons.
- Review and critique the Intern's lesson plans before the Intern is allowed to implement the plan.
- Plan cooperatively, but require/allow the Intern to use creativity in developing plans independently.
- Discuss pro-active classroom management techniques.
- Share resources and technology that can be used to enhance instruction.
- Discuss how to provide for a variety of learning styles and classroom adaptations when planning instruction.
- Share ideas for integrating subject matter.
- Reflect upon the effectiveness of daily, weekly and long-range plans.
- Help the intern modify and revise plans appropriately.
- Provide the intern with strategies to differentiate instruction to include all students.
- Help the intern prepare for three to five days of full days of teaching by allowing gradual teaching of full days (Internship II)

## Teaching

- Model instructional techniques and strategies:
  1. for individual, small group, and whole group class instruction
  2. that appeal to a variety of learning styles
  3. to demonstrate integration of subject matter
  4. to reflect a multicultural anti-bias approach
  5. to utilize technology
  6. to create a positive classroom climate
- Discuss instructional delivery with the intern to provide opportunities for questions and reflection on the teaching experience:
  1. encourage the Intern to try her/his own ideas/techniques
  2. observe the Intern delivering instruction; take notes, and provide formative feedback during a conversation that highlights specifics of the intern's effectiveness and areas for continued growth
- Provide opportunities for the intern to observe other classrooms
- Share favorite time-tested teaching ideas
- Share how to set up a classroom at the beginning of the school year

## **Classroom Management and Building Children's Behavior**

- Share established opening routines, operating procedures, and teaching expectations. Explain the purpose of the routines, how they are enforced, how they save time, and model how to introduce a new routine to the class.
- Share a plan for management and discipline; explain the rationale behind it.
- Discuss rules, rewards, and consequences as they pertain to the management system.
- Provide the intern with a copy of discipline procedures and consequences regularly used.
- Model effective techniques of management and discipline.
- Encourage the intern to try her/his own discipline and management techniques.
- Observe the intern implementing management strategies and transitions.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of the techniques.
- Discuss other possible discipline techniques and ideas of management.

## **Assessment**

- Familiarize intern with various methods and tests used in diagnostic evaluation and assessment.
- Provide examples of formative and summative assessment instruments used in the classroom.
- Discuss how to use test results (informal, formal i.e. state assessments, school system assessments) and other assessment measures in planning for effective teaching.
- If appropriate, assist the Intern in writing and/or administering tests.
- Discuss informal assessment methods.
- Discuss rubrics to assess performance; share ways to create rubrics.
- Share performance based assessments and expected student outcomes.
- Share grading procedures, grade books, and other methods of documenting student learning.
- Allow the intern to assist in recording report card grades and providing comments.
- Provide opportunities for reflection on the intern's effectiveness in assessment of student learning.

## **Working with Parents and Families**

- Provide opportunities for the intern to meet and interact with parents/families.
- Allow the intern to observe a parent conference and to participate when appropriate. Share parent-conferencing tips with the Intern.
- Encourage the intern to write an introductory letter to families. Oversee all communication with parents, whether written or by telephone. Emphasize the need to consult on all decisions concerning communication with parents.
- Discuss confidentiality regarding the sharing of information with parents about other students.
- Provide opportunities for the intern to participate in school functions where parents are present.
- Discuss and reflect upon the intern's interpersonal skills with adults and students.

## **Incorporating Technology**

- Utilize technology and media communication to enhance teaching and learning and to support instruction.
- Orient the intern about the availability of technological equipment and the procedures for accessing the equipment.
- Use computers and other technology to reinforce skills and concepts.
- Use technology to deliver instruction and assess learning.

## **Inclusion**

- Model various teaching strategies and use materials that accommodate individual differences and needs.
- Adapt instruction for diverse learners including those who are disabled.
- Share ideas about how individual differences and environmental situations influence and affect children's learning.
- Model anti-bias perspectives on development and learning.
- Create environments that promote respect for children's cultures, home language, and family contexts.

Continue the process of teaching, coaching, and reflecting until the intern is able to plan, implement, and assess instruction independently. Continue to observe and provide feedback regarding all aspects of the teacher's role throughout the entire student teaching internship.

## **Planning for Intern's Extended Teaching (Internship II Only)**

Interns come to the Internship II experience with a variety of strengths and experiences. Therefore, individual Interns will assume full responsibility according to their ability to provide effective instructional experiences and to manage the learning environment. Because of the differences between interns, mentor teachers, and classroom settings, the mentor teacher is in the best position to suggest a plan to the university supervisor regarding the intern's assumption of full classroom responsibility. Gradual assumption of responsibilities lessens frustration and builds confidence. Involving the intern progressively in observations, mentoring, preparing materials, teaching small groups, and then, large groups will help promote a successful experience. Provide the intern with as many responsibilities and decisions as her/his competence warrants and as the situation dictates.

## **Evaluation Procedures**

### **Mid-Point Evaluation**

A mid-point conference between the intern and mentor teacher should be completed. The university supervisor may also be included in this conference. This offers an excellent opportunity for a more comprehensive look at the intern's progress (see Mid-Point Evaluation Form in the Appendix). This is an

opportunity to provide the intern and the mentor teacher a means to identify areas for continued growth while there is enough time to strengthen areas of weakness. The intent of the mid-point evaluation has these goals:

- To assess the effectiveness of the intern's performance
- To discuss concerns about any areas of difficulty related to Internship I/II or supervising experience
- Identify goals for the remainder of the Internship I/II experience and design a plan for achieving these goals

The mid-evaluation should be signed and submitted to the Internship I/Internship II supervisor.

### **Final Evaluation**

A three-way final evaluation conference between the intern, Mentor Teacher, and the University Instructor/Supervisor offers an excellent opportunity for a more comprehensive look at the Intern's progress.

### **Essential Disposition Questionnaire: Candidate Assessment**

During Internship I, the intern should evaluate his/her performance using the TU Disposition Evaluation. During Internship II, the mentor teacher and intern should complete the form together. The Disposition Sheet should be submitted to the Internship I/II instructor each semester (See Appendix).

### **Unsatisfactory Performance**

If an Intern is making unsatisfactory progress in the Internship I/II experience, she/he must be provided with specific feedback regarding performance during the course of the placement. The following suggestions may be helpful in dealing effectively with an Intern who is not progressing satisfactorily:

- Identify the problem(s) and conduct a conference between the intern, the mentor teacher, and the university supervisor.
- If the situation is serious, contact the ECED Department Chairperson immediately.
- Identify areas for growth and create an action plan with timelines for remediation.
- Revise the teaching schedule to accommodate the situation. It may be helpful to reduce the teaching load so the intern can focus on improvement.
- Arrange for the intern to observe a master teacher teaching a lesson to a small group, and then, have the intern teach a similar lesson to another small group.
- Clarify performance expectations for the intern.
- Increase observations of the intern and provide continuous written and verbal feedback that includes specific examples for change. Notify the Internship I/II instructor of the intern's progress or lack thereof.
- Provide multiple opportunities for the Intern to reflect on instruction and assess her/his own performance.
- Identify the intern's strengths; work in these areas to enhance the possibility of success.
- Keep accurate written records of specific instances of difficulties and discuss them with the intern.

- Keep a log of dates, times, places, copies of feedback from observations, summaries of conferences, notes from telephone calls and emails, specific incidents, written feedback signed by the intern or another professional staff member, and/or any other documentation that is relevant to the situation.
- Arrange for the principal or another teacher or faculty member to observe the intern and provide feedback.

If it appears that the intern cannot improve performance, the Internship Instructor should consult with the intern, the mentor teacher, and the ECED Department Chairperson. All parties will work to come to a resolution of the situation.